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The Crystal Gazer

A COMIC SKETCH

in One Act.

by

LEOPOLD MONTAGUE

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NOTE.—If necessary, the part of the *clairvoyante* can be taken by a gentleman calling himself “the Red Magician,” and merely adapting the text to suit the change of sex.

SCENE.—*Drawing-room. Entrances R. and L. Table R.C. Armchair R. of table. Sofa down L. On table some unopened letters and a glass bowl containing water. Enter MADAME LA SORCIERE, in teagown, R.*

LA S. Now let me see how many letters there are this morning. Ah, quite a pile! Good, very good! Everybody wants to know the future. Rich and poor, they are all the same. No, not quite. Tell the future to the poor and you get forty shillings or a month. Tell it to the rich, and you get nothing but the shillings. (*Sits in armchair by the table.*) That is why I have set up as a fashionable soothsayer. It pays well, and I may honestly say that I know as much of the future—as anybody else. Now let me see who want their fortunes told. (*Opens a letter—reads*) “Madam, I wish to consult you on a matter greatly affecting my happiness. I have been in the West Indies, where I made the acquaintance of a charming young lady.” (*Spoken*) Ah, a woman at the bottom of it as usual. (*Reads*) “We travelled to England on board the same steamer, and on the way became engaged.” (*Spoken*) Of course—the usual consequence. (*Reads*) “She left me at Gravesend.” (*Spoken*) I see—as soon as she could get away from him. (*Reads*) “To join her aunt, who had come down to from town to meet her.” (*Spoken*) Oh, only her aunt! (*Reads*) “with the understanding that I was to call upon her next day. Imagine my dismay on finding that I had lost the address she gave me, having written it on my cuff, which I inadvertently sent to the wash. All efforts to trace her having proved futile. I am now at my wits’ end, so I come to you.” (*Spoken*) Dear me—how complimentary! (*Reads*) “having heard of your marvellous powers as a *clairvoyante*. I trust you may be able to assist me, and accordingly propose calling on you at three o’clock to-morrow afternoon. I remain, Madam, yours faithfully, Kenneth Frazer.”

Three o'clock this afternoon. H'm, that's rather short notice. I always like plenty of notice. It is surprising how much one can tell about a person's past if one only has time to make a few judicious enquiries beforehand. Why I can even tell people what they have come to consult me about. Yes, without fail—when I have previously found out. Ha, ha, ha! What gulls people are! Now there's the young lady who is to call upon me this morning. I know exactly what she wants. She has lost her poodle and wants me to find it. First I shall describe the poodle. She will think that supernatural, but my maid has found out all about him from her cook. Then she will want to know where he is, and as I have already traced him to the Dogs' Home, the oracle will speak. Ha, ha! It may mean a five pound note. (*Bell off L.*) There she is. (*Rises*) My maid will show her in here where I will keep her waiting a few minutes to impress her—and prepare her for my mysterious costume and foreign accent. Oh, what a deceitful world this is! (*Takes up letters and Exit R.*)

(*Enter BESSIE BLANK, L.*)

BESS. So this is the room of the mysterious Madame La Sorciere! I declare the room makes me feel quite creepy. Yet I don't see any retorts or alembics about. No, not even a stuffed crocodile. (*Sits on sofa.*) I hope—I hope it isn't under the sofa! (*Rises, bus.*) No, it's only a stool. (*Sees bowl on table.*) What's this? Oh, I know. It's for divination. You look into the water and you see (*bus.*)—nothing but the bottom! Well, I hope Madame will be able to see Kenneth. Where can

he be? What can have become of him? (*Sits on sofa.*) It's enough to make one cry—just when one has got engaged, to go and lose one's lover like this! (*Weeps.*) But I won't give way. Madame can tell me where he is—I'm sure she can. They say she is simply wonderful. If Kenneth is on earth she'll see him in the water.

(*Enter MADAME LA SORCIERE, R., wearing magician's robes.*)

The *clairvoyante* herself!

LA S. (*with foreign accent*) Welcome. Do not rise.

BESS. I have come—

LA S. I know why you have come.

BESS. No? Really? How wonderful!

LA S. You would have news of your faithful companion. Am I not right?

BESS. Yes, yes. How clever you are! And you think he is faithful?

LA S. I know he is.

BESS. Oh, you have already removed a load from my mind!

LA S. But he has been led astray.

BESS. Astray? Tell me more—more!

LA S. (*sitting by her*) One moment. For describing the objects of your thoughts by thought-transference or animal magnetism my charge is

one guinea. Should you want to know more, there is the crystal bowl in which I can invariably see and describe what is passing or has recently occurred in any part of the globe. Divination by means of crystal bowl, five guineas. I wish to avoid any possible misunderstanding.

BESS. Yes—exactly—but I think I'll begin with the animal magnetism. (*Aside*) I want to test her.

LA S. Certainly, my dear. There is nothing to prevent our adopting the more expensive methods later on. Your hand, child. (*Bus.*) Kindly remove your glove. (*Bus.*) Now think of the the lost one.

BESS. Heigh-ho!

LA S. He is dark.

BESS. He is.

LA S. With curly hair.

BESS. Quite right.

LA S. And beautiful brown eyes.

BESS. Yes-dear fellow!

LA S. Though his ears are perhaps a trifle long.

BESS. (*reflectively*). Well, perhaps they are.

LA S. He has been recently shaved.

BESS. Why, of course—

LA S. And was washed last Saturday.

BESS. Really!

LA S. Ah, you see I know all about him.

BESS. So it seems.

LA S. He once followed you into church.

BESS. He did.

LA S. And had to be removed by the pew-opener.

BESS. No, no!

LA S. Yes—because he persisted in getting on your lap.

BESS. (*indignantly*) I assure you such a thing never occurred.

LA S. You must have forgotten it. Animal magnetism cannot lie. It tells me he is intelligent and affectionate.

BESS. There you are right. You have told me his virtues—now tell me his faults.

LA S. Well, he is rather given to over-eating.

BESS. I've never noticed it.

LA S. Yes, he would eat all day long if he had the opportunity.

BESS. How horrid!

LA S. Then he spends too much of his time in the kitchen with the servants.

BESS. With the servants?

LA S. Yes—he is particularly fond of the cook.

BESS. Oh, the wretch! Go on! Go on!

LA S. (*Dropping hand.*) That is all that I can see. I can tell you no more without resorting to the crystal globe. (*Crossing R.*) If you would like me to use it I can tell you why he left home and what he is doing at this moment. But as I told you, the fee is—

BESS. Yes, yes—I know. (*Aside*) Shall I? Can I believe what she tells me? She was only wrong in one thing, and all the rest was true. And how could she know? How could she describe Kenneth, when I never even told her what I came for? Then that cook? Oh, I'd give my last penny to find out all about that cook! (*Taking out purse—to LA S.*) Five pounds. (*Rises.*)

LA S. Guineas, my dear.

BESS. Of course. (*Giving money.*) I think you will find that is right.

LA S. (*R. C.*) A thousand thanks. But I may say at once that if I am the means of restoring your lost darling, I shall expect—

BESS. Go on. When I know all, I may not want him.

LA S. *walks round table, making passes over the bowl, then sits on chair by table, gazing into bowl. BESS stands L. C. Slow music.*)

LA S. Ah, the water turns milky. Now it clears, and I see a street. The lamps are lit, so it

is evening. A stout woman is walking on the side-way.

BESS. It's that cook!

LA S. And he is following her.

BESS. I knew it!

LA S. But see! He in turn is followed by a rough-looking man in moleskin breeches.

BESS. The cook's young man.

LA S. He lingers at a corner. Oh, he is in great danger. The ruffian deftly throws a noose round his neck and—

BESS. Good heavens! A garotter! Go on—I can bear it. What do you see?

LA S. I see the interior of a miserably furnished garret. There is a sort of cage, and he is within.

BESS. Oh my poor darling! Yet he lives—he lives!

LA S. Yes. Ha! He is tearing out one of the bars with his teeth.

BESS. His teeth!

LA S. The bar gives way. He rushes out of the house. He is free.

BESS. Saved!

LA S. No. He is wandering about the slums. He is lost.

BESS. Lost—lost in London!

LA S. He is half-starved. His tongue is hanging out.

BESS. Oh it is too horrible!

LA S. He shivers with the cold.

BESS. Tell me—how is he dressed?

LA S. Dressed? He has nothing on but his collar.

BESS. Oh!

LA S. In vain he begs to the passers-by for a bone.

BESS. Hard-hearted brutes!

LA S. He sees the remains of a bloater in the gutter.

BESS. Don't say he eats it.

LA S. No—he is rolling upon the—

BESS. The ground! I see. His strength has given way. He is dying.

LA S. No. I see the figure of a policeman bending over him.

BESS. Then he is rescued?

LA S. The picture fades and reforms itself. I see the interior of a cell. He is chained to the wall.

BESS. What? Arrested for being homeless? And this is law—justice? Yet we live in an enlightened age!

LA. S. Next I see him in a van.

BESS. Black Maria!

LA S. Which conveys him to a building surrounded by a high railing. Ah, I recognize the place. I see no more. He must be in that building now.

BESS. Newgate? Holloway?

LA S. Stop. A scene from the future discloses itself. His troubles are at an end. You have come to his rescue. The barred gate is thrown open and he rushes forth joyfully wagging his tail.

BESS. Wagging his what?

LA S. (*rising*). Yes—found—safe and sound—at the Home for Lost Dogs!

BESS. What on earth are you talking about?

LA S. Why your poodle dog Zou-Zou.

BESS. I don't understand. I never had a poodle dog.

LA S. (*Aside*). Can I have made a mistake? (*To BESS.*) You are surely the lady who made an appointment for eleven this morning?

BESS. I made no appointment.

LA S. Then what in the world have you come about?

BESS. You told me you knew.

LA S. (*aside*). This is awkward. (*Aloud*.) The fact is I mistook you for another person. If you insist on calling on me without making a proper appointment, it is no fault of mine if you have to put up with a vision intended for somebody else.

BESS. That's all very fine, but what about *my* feelings? Here I've been working myself up and upsetting my nerves about the adventures of some miserable mongrel, thinking all the time it was my—my— Oh, it's too bad!

LA S. (*pointing to bowl*). Perhaps you would like me to try again.

BESS. Certainly not.

LA S. As you please. You have had a very good vision and you must make the best of it.

BESS. I want my money back.

LA S. I make it a rule never to return fees.

BESS. Then I'll tell what you are. You are a cheat—a trickster—a charlatan!

LA S. Softly, softly!

BESS. Yes, and I'll show you up. I can do it too. My pa's a magistrate and I've an Uncle on the County Council.

LA S. (*aside*). That is serious.

BESS. If you want to know what I came for—I came to ask you for the present address of the gentleman to whom I am engaged. I shall find

him, never fear, without *your* assistance, and it may interest you to know that he writes for all the Society papers.

LA S. (*aside*). Good gracious!

BESS. He'll advertise your show for you. (*At door L.*) Good morning. (*Goes out*).

LA S. She'll ruin me!

BESS. (*re-appearing*). You may perhaps know his name. It is Kenneth Fraser.

LA S. Eh? (*Aside.*) Where have I seen that name? I know! (*Aloud.*) Stop. Stop!

BESS. What is it now?

LA S. I can find him for you.

BESS. (*sarcastically*). Oh yes—following the cook or at the Dogs' Home.

LA S. No. He will be here, in this house, this afternoon. See this letter. (*Producing it.*) It is from the man himself.

BESS. (*L. C. taking letter and reading it.*) "A matter greatly affecting my happiness—left me at Gravesend—lost the address." Yes, yes, it is indeed from my own lost Kenneth! (*Kisses letter.*)

LA S. And you owe his discovery to me.

BESS. I do, indeed. Pardon my harsh words.

LA S. Say no more about them. I trust that in spite of our somewhat unsatisfactory experi-

ment, you may yet promise to recommend me to your friends.

BESS. I feel happy enough to promise anything.

LA S. Very good. (*To audience.*) Madame La Sorcière will always do her best to satisfy the kind friends who patronize her performance, and hopes that those who have witnessed it may not consider their money entirely thrown away.

CURTAIN.

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